

## I. Numbers

- a. Purpose: In this session we shall survey the book of Numbers so that we would be better informed of what this book is about and desire to study it deeper in the near future.
- b. Authorship
  - i. Remember Numbers is part of the first five books in the Bible called the Laws of Moses which are seen as from Moses.
    1. Jesus saw these books that would have included Genesis as being from Moses when He called it the Laws of Moses: “*Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’*” (Luke 24:44)
    2. The Apostle and Author John believed they were from Moses: “*For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.*” (John 1:17)
  - ii. Jewish and Christian tradition attribute the Book of Numbers to Moses.<sup>1</sup>
  - iii. During the journey in the wilderness which is when the Book of Moses takes place, we see Moses was writing things down: “*Moses recorded their starting places according to their journeys by the command of the Lord, and these are their journeys according to their starting places.*” (Numbers 33:2)<sup>2</sup>
- c. Purpose
  - i. The book’s purpose “is to contrast the faithfulness of God with the faithlessness and rebellion of the Israelites. The former is seen in God’s keeping of His covenant promise to make Israel a numerous people (as shown by the census). The latter is attested by the record...”<sup>3</sup>
  - ii. This book deals with three areas: (1) how the nation of Israel was to order itself during its journey in the wilderness, (2) how the priests and Levites were to function during a time in which they were traveling a lot and (3) finally how the nation was prepared for the upcoming conquest of Canaan.<sup>4</sup>
- d. Structure
  - i. How should we outline the book of Numbers?
    1. How to outline the book is a source of disagreement among Bible commentators.
    2. Most commentators see the book arranged by geographical movements and that method has resulted in many different proposals.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eugene Merrill, “Numbers” in *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Victor ), 215.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Hill and John Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 145.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Hill and John Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 147.

<sup>4</sup> Eugene Merrill, “Numbers” in *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Victor ), 215.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Grisanti, “Exodus” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 9204.

3. But a better approach towards understanding the book's structure is to note the two censuses in the book found in **Numbers 1** and **Numbers 26**.<sup>6</sup>
    - a. This approach notes the change of generations which is an important theme in the book and also the remainder of the Laws of Moses.<sup>7</sup>
    - b. The outline also has is compelling from the parallel in both sections of the book of events and subjects.<sup>8</sup>
- ii. The outline<sup>9</sup>
1. The experience of the Old Generation in the Wilderness (**Numbers 1-25**)
    - a. The Preparation and Inauguration of Israel's March to the Promised Land (**Numbers 1-10**)
    - b. An Abrupt Slide into Rebellion (**Numbers 11-20**)
    - c. The End of the First Generation: Signs of Hope Coupled with Failures (**Numbers 21-25**)
  2. The Prospects for the New Generation to Enter the Promised Land (**Numbers 26-36**)
    - a. A Second Census: The Rise of a Generation of Hope (**Numbers 26**)
    - b. The Daughters of Zelophehad and Land Inheritance (**Numbers 27:1-11**)
    - c. Succession of Leadership from Moses to Joshua (**Numbers 27:12-23**)
    - d. Appointed Offerings and Voluntary Vows (**Numbers 28-30**)
    - e. War of Vengeance against the Midianites (**Numbers 31**)
    - f. Allocation of Transjordanian Land to Reuben, Gad, and Half of Manasseh (**Numbers 32**)
    - g. Summary of Israel's Journey from Egypt to Canaan (**Numbers 33:1-49**)
    - h. Final Instructions about Conquest and Inheritance (**Numbers 33:50-35:34**)
    - i. The Daughters of Zelophehad and Land Inheritance (**Numbers 36**)
- e. Setting

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Grisanti, "Exodus" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 8520-8521.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Grisanti, "Exodus" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 8522-8523.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Grisanti, "Exodus" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 8524-8525.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted verbatim from Michael Grisanti, "Exodus" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 8584 onwards.

- i. The Hebrew in the wilderness “were ready to depart from Mount Sinai and travel to the long-anticipated land of promise.”<sup>10</sup>
- ii. The book covers a period of thirty eight years and nine months.<sup>11</sup>
- iii. For the first half of the book it focuses on the first generation after the Exodus from Mount Sinai to their journey of Moab.
  - 1. **Numbers 1-10** takes place in the region of Sinai.<sup>12</sup>
  - 2. **Numbers 11** onwards vary. They would end up stopping at 20 locations.<sup>13</sup>

f. Themes

- i. Preparation for the Promise Land
  - 1. **Numbers 1-10** is on the Preparation and Inauguration of Israel's March to the Promised Land for the first generation
    - a. It begins with a census, God's rule for the camps and rules for the Levites and priesthood **Numbers 1-4**.
    - b. **Numbers 5-6** as part of that preparation has laws concerning defilement, adultery test and Nazarite vow.
    - c. **Numbers 7-8** has details concerning sacrifices and the altar while **Numbers 9** is on the Passover and **Numbers 10** is on regulations concerning travel.
  - 2. The second half of the book on the second generation also contain regulations and laws in preparation for the promise land.
    - a. For instance **Numbers 28-30** are on vows and offerings.
- ii. Sinfulness of humanity
  - 1. **Numbers 11-20** record some more regulations but also the people's rebellion
    - a. **Chapter 11** right away record people complaining.
    - b. **Chapters 13-14** is the most serious of the rebellion with the people sending out spies to the Promise Land and deciding not to go to the Promise Land but wanting to go back to Egypt instead. The Lord punished them with a forty year penalty in **Numbers 14:32-34**.
    - c. There is also Korah's rebellion in **Numbers 16**.
  - 2. The second half of the book also reveal the sinfulness of the people. For instance we see the mix marriage of the Israelites with the Moabites and the consequences in **Numbers 25**.
- iii. The Greatness of God
  - 1. Despite Israel's sins God is still gracious, allowing the Israelites military victories against Gentiles in **Numbers 21:21-35**.
  - 2. Despite Balaam the false prophet being hired by Balak to curse Israel, God still made Balak bless Israel instead in **Numbers 22-24**.

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Grisanti, “Exodus” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 8465-8466.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Hill and John Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 147.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Grisanti, “Exodus” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 8604.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Grisanti, “Exodus” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 8655.

- iv. The Promise-Plan of God continued
  - 1. The fulfillment of God's promise plan
    - a. Recall God's promise earlier: *"indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies."* (Genesis 22:17; cf. Genesis 26:4)
    - b. We see the fulfillment of this with the size of the population seen in the Census in the book of Numbers.
  - 2. Reinforced God's promise: After Balaam failed to curse Israel after three attempts, on the fourth prophecy He made an astounding prophecy: *"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth."* (Numbers 24:17)
    - a. Picking up the Messianic title of the Messiah as "scepter" from Genesis 49:10 we see another detail of the Messiah: The Messiah will one day will be called "star" as well.
    - b. Also the Messiah will one day crush Moab.